will never occur whereupon he or she is called into any humanitarian mission.

Considering these core professional and moral pre-
conditions and obligations, the University of Applied
Sciences in Muenster / Germany refrained from creat-
ing just another special academic study and training
course for humanitarian assistance but launched the
Centre of Competence for Humanitarian Relief in 2001
for the coordination of all humanitarian activities of
the scientific units of UAS Muenster and around.

Muenster University of Applied Sciences has a long
tradition of education: founded in 1971 after the merger
of public and private schools of engineering and voca-
tional training institutions, it is now one of Germany’s
largest and most successful institutions of its kind, of-
fering more than 60 degree courses for more than
10,000 students. Together, academics, staff and stu-
dents make up the great research potential of Muen-
ster University of Applied Sciences. Their strength lies
in the diversity of their knowledge, their comprehe
sive experiences and their inquisitiveness.

Indebted to tradition and yet enthusiastic about in-
novation, research and development is conducted be-
yond the boundaries of the 12 faculties and 2 central
scientific establishments in Muenster and Steinfurt. In
co-operation with higher education institutions and re-
search institutes all over the world and with partn-
ers in business, Muenster University of Applied Sciences is
in constant pursuit of innovative solutions. Muenster
University of Applied Sciences demonstrates its com-
petence in research and its high standards of quality in
six areas:

Construction | Environment | Resources
Health | Life Sciences
Product and Process Development
Applied Social Sciences
Company and Services Management
Communication | Information

Each heading represents a multitude of application
areas – a kind of construction kit containing around 70
individual units. From these, our clients can select the
areas of competence relevant to their requirements.
And yet this matrix is by no means a static entity. It is
currently being revised with respect to new develop-
ments in research and to the changing demands of the
market.

The aim of Muenster University of Applied Sciences
is to be the top address for practical education and re-
search. Quality pervades all areas within the univer-

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**The Centre of Competence for Humanitarian Relief of the University of Applied Sciences in Muenster, Germany**

**BY JOACHIM GARDEMMANN AND FRANZISKA OHNHEISER**

**CENTRE OF COMPETENCE FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF MUENSTER, GERMANY**

Data and experience gathered from the humanitarian
missions of the last decades show that autonomy and
professionalism of the applicatory delegates in their re-
spective fields of work are the most indispensable re-
quirements. The essential degree of professionalism is
usually based upon comprehensive vocational or aca-
demic training and long lasting professional experience
before joining any humanitarian organisation. For a
successful participation in humanitarian missions sen-
ior professionals are required, being senior characters
with the ability to independently perform and guide
even under the most unfavourable conditions. We need
autonomous senior technicians, engineers, midwives,
nurses and doctors. Hence, the most effective prepara-
tion for becoming an effective member of a humani-
tarian team is excellent vocational or academic train-
ing at home and several years of relevant professional
experience. In the humanitarian field we need engi-
ners that can construct a bridge, surgeons that can per-
form operations and midwives that can deliver babies.
Of course, as well as this sound professional base, addi-
tional special competencies are essential, such as hu-
manitarian ethics, international humanitarian law, lo-
gistics, water and sanitation and so on. Regularly, these
specific skills and competencies for humanitarian work
are imparted by preparatory vocational courses given
by the humanitarian organisations themselves before-
hand. The principle of volunteering employment, com-
bining professional experience with independence and
not resting on a commercial basis, has already been ad-
dressed by Henry Dunant in his 1862 »A Memory of
Solferino«: »For work of this kind, paid help is not what
is wanted.« Hence, the outstanding wishful thinking of
a true humanitarian should always be that a necessity

**Prof. Dr. med. Joachim Gardemann, M. san. and
Franziska Ohnheiser, B.A.,
University of Applied
Sciences
Muenster, Germany**
University's quality sets the standards for our teaching, with our wide range of courses being oriented towards demand. Quality is the basis on which we achieve our excellent success in research – we have the highest rate of third-party funding of any German university. It is quality that inspires companies to enter into strategic alliances and partnerships with the university. It is also the hallmark of a finely tuned system of internal resource management. All these attributes characterise the image of this modern, high-performance and customer-oriented university.

Our Mission Statement expresses the way in which the university sees itself. It is implemented at all levels and in all spheres of activity. Our cooperative style of leadership is an expression of our democratic self-conception. On this basis, and whilst fully aware of its social responsibility, the university follows five maxims:

1. Practice orientation
2. Interdisciplinarity
3. Interculturality
4. Equal opportunities
5. Commitment to service

Science-based learning and research are practice-oriented if they are in touch with the practical side of things. Our academic teaching is geared towards the demands of today's and tomorrow's occupational fields; researchers derive their topics from application-oriented problems. In the process, we take into account the expectations of practitioners, and have a shaping influence on them, too.

The tasks of modern society are complex, and can only rarely be assigned to individual academic disciplines. The requirement for comprehensive solutions is that the manifold approaches of subject areas are brought together. Which is why interdisciplinarity cooperation in teaching and research is a matter of course for us.

Dialogue between different cultures requires open-mindedness towards the unknown and treating one another with respect. We overcome language barriers in our everyday work, and also belong to a global network of cooperation partners. Conveying the cross-cultural skills required for this is an equally important matter to us as integrating our international students.

The university views the diversity of people as an enrichment. For this reason, we are strongly committed to ensuring comprehensive access to our offerings – regardless of gender, ethnic or social origin, religion, ideology, disability, age or sexual identity.

The actions and decisions taken by universities must be oriented towards the legitimate interests and needs of current and future students, employees and partners. For this reason, a strong service philosophy is an essential aspect of our culture of quality.

The Centre of Competence for Humanitarian Relief is an embodiment and institutional materialisation of the University's maxims. Here, all humanitarian activities in the fields of practical work, research or fund raising are focused and bundled. Examples of the manifold applied research projects of UAS Muenster in the humanitarian field are sub-surface dams in Ethiopia, epidemiology in Iran, disaster management in Germany, refugee health worldwide and in Germany, the humanitarian ethics and the responsibility to protect.

Muenster, being the historical arena of the European Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and accommodating numerous universities is a unique location for humanitarian research and activities. The Centre of Competence for Humanitarian Relief offers courses and research topics to all faculties including the University School of Medicine and School of Law. Each semester, practical exercise courses are held in cooperation with the German Red Cross in order to acquaint students and researchers with scientific issues and practical problems of humanitarian assistance. Interested and eligible participants are then counselled to continue their professional education and career and are connected to internationally active humanitarian organisations for further delegate training programmes.


Abstract

Das Kompetenzzentrum Humanitäre Hilfe der Fachhochschule Münster